10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
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197 stand, Pwo because of the nasal effect on the pro-
194 nunciation.

197 The Bwè dialects, spoken near Toungoo in the hills
177 about Thandaung, have many nasal sounds and somewhat resemble the Pwo. Other dialects in the mountains differ quite widely from each other but the people in the hills speak several of these dialects for there is now much more intermingling than there was formerly when feuds kept the people apart and made it possible for different dialects to grow up even within a few miles of each other.

● 193 The grammar of the various dialects is not difficult. The sentence is formed after the same model as the English, with subject, verb, and object. The written and spoken language are very similar and direct. There are honorifics as in Burmese. There is no sex designation in the names of individuals, and so the Karens use *Saw* for all men and *Naw* for all women or girls.

212 When Westerners first came into contact with them
177 the Karens had no written language. But so urgent was
773 the demand of those who accepted the missionaries as
797 fulfilling the prophesies uttered by their old poets that some day they would be found by the "Younger White Brother" who would come across the sea in great ships "with white wings" and bring them the Book which their ancestors were supposed to have neglected and lost, that Dr. Wade, in about 1830, reduced the language of the Sgaw dialect to writing. He used the Burmese alphabet, for at that time any Karen who knew anything about reading could read in the Burmese language of the monastery. It was not then foreseen that English and the Roman letter would occupy such an important place in world affairs as they now enjoy.

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101 174 114 the western part of ancient China. The first part of the name, "Ch," means "people," and the latter part, "Yang," is the distinctive tribal name. Turning now to the Karen word "Pgha K'Nyaw." "Pgha" is a general word meaning people. "K'Nyaw" is, according to my informant, composed of two elements: "K'," a prefix often found in the names of tribes in the vicinity of Burma and denoting a tribal group, as "Kachin," "Kethe," or "Karok" (as used by the Talaing of the Chinese). "Nyaw" is derived from "Yang," referred to above. The final nasal "ng" is softened in Karen to the open syllable "aw," following the analogy of many words occurring in the dialects or in Burmese and having nasal endings; and "n" and "ny" are interchangeable. Thus, if this reasoning is correct, "Pgha K'Nyaw" is derived from the ancient "Yang," and is like the source from which the Burmese "Kayin" is derived.[7] This explanation affords another link connecting the Karen with the early dwellers within the confines of the present Chinese Republic.

197 The language of the Karen, after being classed in various ways, has now been recognized as a Sinitic language and, according to the last Burma *Census* (1911) is set down as belonging to the "Siamese-Chinese" sub-family of the Tibeto-Chinese languages, being grouped with the Tai or Shan. I feel sure that this last grouping is subject to revision by the philologists. While at first glance the relationship of these languages appears to be remote, Major H. R. Davies makes a very pertinent statement when he says: "Doubtless owing to phonetic change and the splitting of initial double consonants, many words have been altered beyond all hope of recognition, but a systematic study of the subject would, I believe, reveal many unsuspected resemblances."[8]

When we consider that many of these languages have never been fixed by written characters and that within the past few decades, the Karen language has so changed that the bard literature of a century ago is almost unintelligible to the present generation, we can see how complicated the problem is and that it is only capable of solution, if at all, at the hands of experts.

193 The Karen language, as we now have it, is a monosyllabic agglutinated speech, with no final consonants in Sgaw Karen and with nasals and finals in other dialects. These are all marks of Sinitic

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[7] Dr. Martin in the *Lore of Cathay* gives the names of the other three of the four ancient tribes of China as the Le in the North, the Yi in the East, and the Man in the South.

[8] Maj. H. R. Davies, *Yunnan, The Link between Burma and the Yangtze.*

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speech. Dr. D. C. Gilmore believes that the Pwo dialect branched off from the parent stem earlier than the Sgaw, but kept the original nasals and, being in closer contact with outside races, adopted more outside words.[9] The Sgaw has dropped the final nasals, because they were more difficult to pronounce, but has kept the original form of the language to a greater extent than the Pwo.

The fact that the Karen have used bronze drums for many generations has, I think, a bearing on their racial relationship. These remarkable drums have only recently been studied by Western scholars, and their full significance is still a matter for investigation. These drums were formerly thought to be of Chinese origin, but it seems that they are to be attributed to aboriginal tribes, found in what is now Tong King and Yunnan by the Chinese generals, Ma Yuon (41, A.D.) and Chu-Ko Liang (230, A.D.), who conquered these territories for the Chinese.[10]

The upper portion of Camboja is now considered to be the original home of these drums. They formed part of the possessions of the chiefs and were considered very precious, each being worth from eight to ten oxen. Chu-ko Liang is reported to have exacted sixty-three bronze drums as tribute from the barbarians and to have taken them back with him. Among the peoples of Burma the Karen seem to be the only race that has made use of these drums. They do not manufacture them, but buy them from the more industrious Shans, who do not appear to set much store by them.[11] Among the Karen, until recent times, the owner of one of these instruments was considered of more worth than a man who had seven elephants. A drum often formed the ransom of a village or the dowry of a maiden. Although so valued a possession often belongs to a chief, it may belong to any one who can purchase it.

It may have been from the Karen that the Chinese generals exacted part or all of their tribute. If so, this people was living in the mountains of Yunnan at the beginning of the Christian era.

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[9] D. C. Gilmore, "Phonetic Changes in the Karen Languages" in *Journal, Burma Research Society*, Vol. VIII, Pt. II, pp. 122, ff.

[10] Several pamphlets and articles in anthropological journals deal with these drums. The most extensive work on the subject, which is in German, is by Franz Heger and is entitled *Alte Metalltrommeln aus Sudost-Asien*, Leipzig 1902. An excellent short work entitled "Anciens Tambours de Bronze," is by H. Parmentier and is printed in the *Bulletin l'Ecole d' Extreme-Orient*, Hanoi, 118. See also Chapter XIII on Bronze Drums, pp. 118-126.

[11] W. W. Cochrane, in *The Shans*, mentions the Shan towns of Tagaung or Ta Kaung and Mogaung or Mong Kawg as denoting, respectively, Drum Ferry and Drum Town, and on page 62 he says: "They took also a palace drum, whose reverberations could call the people together, daunt enemies, or bring rain in time of drought." He makes no further reference to their use.

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CHAPTER V

LANGUAGE

In Chapter I I referred briefly to the relationship of the Karen dialects to the other languages of Burma and noted the bearing of that subject upon the question of the origin of the people. I adopted the grouping suggested in the last Burma *Census* (that of 1911), where those dialects are described as forming a Sinitic or Karen group of the Siamese-Chinese sub-family of the Tibeto-Chinese languages. This group comprises three principal branches, namely, the Sgaw, the Pwo (including the Taungthu), and the Bwe, which embraces several minor dialects in the Toungoo and Red Karen country. Some of these latter forms of speech have been very little studied. A few books have been published in Bwe, but at present are superseded by publications in the Sgaw. The Sgaw language was reduced to writing by Dr. Jonathan Wade in 1832, the Burmese alphabet being used in denoting most of the sounds, while certain symbols were employed for such letters as had no equivalent in Burmese. In this way a perfect phonetic alphabet was created.

It may not be out of place in this connection to point out a few of the marked characteristics of the Karen language. The order of words in the sentence is that of the English, as well as of the Chinese and Tai, namely, subject, predicate, and object. The language is monosyllabic, except in a few instances, some of which are more apparent than real. Each root may be used in any form of speech, that is, as noun, adjective, verb, or adverb, by the addition of the proper particle or in combination with other roots. Each syllable has a signification of its own and a grammatical relation to one or more of the other syllables in every compound part of speech.

Dr. Wade calls attention to the fact that the Karen often use words in pairs, verbs being paired sometimes merely for the sake of euphony, though generally to give fullness and force to the idea intended. Such pairing of words, whether nouns, verbs, or other parts of speech, invest the Karen language, Dr. Wade thinks, with "a beauty and force of expression unsurpassed perhaps in any

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193 other language in the world." These paired words, which are called by the Karen "father and mother words," may be parsed separately or together according to their position in the sentence. They may consist of two roots having similar meanings, or of a well-known root together with one which by itself has no meaning now commonly understood. Misapprehension is often avoided by the use of paired words. For example, "ni" (with the circumflex tone) means year, and the same syllable (with the long tone) means day. When this monosyllable is carelessly pronounced, one does not always catch the difference; but "ni-thaw" unmistakably denotes day, because "thaw" is another designation for this period of time; and "ni-la" clearly signifies year, the latter syllable meaning literally month. Such compound words may have compound modifiers which, when used with discrimination, give a pleasing finish to the speech.

197 The Sgaw dialect has six different tones and the Pwo an equal number. The other dialects have various numbers, but not so many and difficult as the tones of the Chinese language.

197 The Sgaw alphabet consists of twenty-five consonants and ten
194 vowels. One character appears both as a gutteral and a consonant. There are no closed syllables in this dialect. The Pwo dialect has three nasal endings which, Dr. Gilmore thinks, are a remnant of the original speech. Evidence in support of this view is supplied by a comparison of the meanings of the single word "hpaw" in Sgaw Karen with the nasal forms expressing the same meanings in Pwo. In the former dialect "hpaw" means one of three things, namely, cook, flower, or granary, while in the latter these meanings require the use of three nasal forms as follows: "hpawn," "hpaw," and "hpan." Other roots from the two dialects show a difference of this sort, indicating that the Sgaw has dropped its original nasals.[1]

193 There is no proper relative pronoun in Sgaw. The particle "leu" serves in this capacity, as well as doing duty as quotation marks, a preposition, and a part of every compound preposition, this last form of speech being one of the characteristics of the language. The reflexive use of the pronoun is a notable idiom in the Sgaw. The demonstrative supplies the place of the definite article. A numerical affix or adjective is employed with every numeral. Each of these affixes is supposed to denote the leading characteristic

[1] *Journal, Burma Research Society*, Vol. VIII, Pt. II, pp. 122 ff.

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of the noun to which it refers. Its use is similar to our saying in English "cattle, five head," or "bread, four loaves."

The verb is almost always considered transitive and, if there should be no word that could properly stand as its object, the nominal pronoun "ta" is added to supply it. The verb "to be" takes the objective case. The double negative is used with the verb after the manner of the French and Burmese idiom, "t'—ba" corresponding to the Burmese "m—bu."

The Karen numerals are based on the decimal system not only from one to ten, but also upwards by tens and hundreds to tens of millions. There is, however, a marked peculiarity in the Bwe method of counting from six to nine, six being three couples; seven, three couples-one; eight, four couples, and nine, four couples-one.

The Pwo dialect does not differ materially from the Sgaw in structure, or greatly in vocabulary, as shown by a comparison of the two by Dr. Wade, which indicates that thirteen-fourteenths of the words of the Sgaw and Pwo are from the same roots. For one familiar only with the Sgaw dialect there is difficulty in immediately understanding the Pwo, because the nasals affect the pronunciation of the latter. The Bwe and other Toungoo dialects seem to have nasals and wide variations in tones. They also possess letters that are lacking in the Sgaw, such as g, j, z, and a peculiar dj that is impossible to represent in English letters. The Mopgha have the letter f, which they pronounce highly aspirated.[1] The Sgaw have no g, j, v, or z. They have both the aspirated and unaspirated k, t, and p. Besides these consonants, they have gutterals and combined consonants to which there are no parallels in Western speech.[2]

Although in the early days the Karen had no written language, it is not to be inferred that they were without a literature. On the contrary, a large quantity of bard literature was handed down orally from generation to generation, being taught by certain elders to the youths who were arriving at maturity, in order that they might transmit it in turn without change to those coming after them. This literature comprises probably more than two hun-

[1] Dr. Mason in the *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1854, Vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 139, ff.

[2] The Grammar of the Karen language by Dr. Wade, now reprinted at the American Baptist Missionary Press, Rangoon, Burma, and that by Dr. Gilmore, from which the writer has largely derived his materials for this chapter, are available for those who wish to make a study of the language. *The Karen Thesaurus*, an encyclopedic dictionary of the Karen language, people, and customs, is a valuable work. Volume I of the new edition, which appeared in 1915, is especially useful, as it contains definitions in English such as are not to be found in the later volumes.

2. Karen

101 The Karen dialects are spoken in Lower Burma and the
197 Shan States. Our studies of Karen are still in a preliminary stage, but enough work has been done to show that this family represents an archaic offshoot from the Tibeto-Burman stock. The present position of the Karen groups, in the lower Salween valley and the Salween-Mekong divide, suggests that the Karen became detached from the main body of Tibeto-Burman-speaking peoples at a relatively early date and migrated southward, probably via the Salween valley, at a period considerably antedating that of the general Burmish-Lolcish expansion. At present the Karen are hemmed in on all sides by groups speaking quite distinct languages, viz. the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Burmese and Southern Lolo, the Thai-speaking Shan, and the Mon-Khmer-speaking Ie and Palaung. The Mon, also of Mon-Khmer stock, must have exerted considerable influence on the Karen at a somewhat earlier period.

193 Karen agrees with Chinese and Thai, and sharply differs
197 from Tibeto-Burman, in placing the object after rather than before the verb. It is on the basis of this feature, and of this feature alone, that Karen has generally been grouped with Chinese and Thai. On the lexical side, however, Karen is basically affiliated with Tibeto-Burman, though it has developed a considerable body of distinctive roots of its own and occasionally shows some affinity for Chinese, e.g. the Karen root *su "hand" corresponds to Chinese shou (手). The

193 numerals are distinctly Tibeto-Burman rather than Chinese-
197 Thai. Tones are more prominent in Karen than in Chinese, Thai, or Tibeto-Burman. The modern Karen dialects are characterized by elaborate tonal systems and abound in phrases composed of two or more vocables, each often representing a distinct root. Prefixes are employed to a limited degree, but on the whole appear to belong to a later morphological stratum than those found in Tibeto-Burman. All the Karen dialects have experienced great phonetic degeneration, especially with respect to finals. Final nasals seem to have fallen together at an early period, and even this secondary nasalization is now maintained only in Pwo and Taungthu, while final stops are represented only in Taungthu. The following sets of roots show the Karen correspondences for final -um and -ung, as reconstructed on the basis of the TB cognates:

Final -um

	TB	Pwo	Taungthu	Sgaw	Bghai	Karenni
three	*(g-)sum	θũ	θũ	θə̃	ɕə̃	ɕə̃
ant	-	t'ũ	t'ũ	tə̃	tə̃	tə̃

Final -ung

stone	*lung	lõ	lũ	lə̃	lə̃	lau
horn	-	nõ	nũ	nə̃	nə̃	nau

Note that the two series are distinguished only in Pwo and Karenni. Note also θ- < s-, a Karen feature.

197 The Karen dialectical divisions are in general of minimal significance, as indicated in the above tabulations. Taungthu,